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A New Look at Left Ventricular Remodeling definition by Cardiac Imaging

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Left ventricular remodeling (LVR) typically manifests as compensatory changes in ventricular mass, composition, and volume as a response to cardiac performance inadequacy [1]. Cardiac multimodality imaging allows us to investigate both counterparts of remodeling, namely structural and functional remodeling [2, 3]. Considering the morbi-mortality burden of LVR, these parameters appear to be of value for diagnosing subclinical disease, conducting patient risk stratification, and monitoring response to therapy [1].

We present here a bibliographic survey of multimodality imaging in the assessment of LVR. We sought to identify all trials that described LVR by means of a substantial imaging method.

We identified 264 studies from January 2000 to May 2013 by searching the online Medline electronic database and by manually examining journals and review articles.

Post-myocardial infarction (MI) (175 studies, 66%) and cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT) (56 studies, 21%) were the 2 most commonly studied pathologies. 132 were based on human bedside research. Most (75%) of the research studies on humans were analytical, whereas 52% of those involving animals were interventional. Among human researches, the mean population size was 114 ± 192 patients (median: 54 [25-75 percentiles: 37-103]). The mean time for follow-up assessment varied: 189 ± 119 days (median: 180 days [25-75 percentiles: 180-180]) for CRT, and 205 ± 217 days (median: 180 [25-75 percentiles: 120-180]) for post-MI.

Nowadays, cardiac magnetic resonance (CMR) and transthoracic echocardiography (TTE) are the two principal tools used for volumetric assessment. They present opposite imaging principles of contrast. While contrast in ultrasonography is created by tissue structures, upon which echo waves are reflected, free precession CMR imaging sequences, relies on a T2/T1 contrast, that can

accentuate the naturally low T1 relaxation time of circulating blood. When combined with partial volume effects inherent of any imaging method, the myocardium may appear mechanically thicker by TTE than by CMR, so that TTE comparatively depicts larger LV mass and smaller volumes [4].

LV volumes and function reproducibility can be affected by the method and type of pathology studied, with still agreements to be lower than 5% by CMR [3]. Nevertheless, the differences in performance of the various imaging techniques are small.

The bibliographic survey found out that as CMR being incompatible with CRT, LV volumetric parameters were exclusively assessed by TTE (n=56, 100%) – CMR was eventually confined to pre-therapy assessment of fibrosis – whereas post-MI studies used both CMR (n=71, 41%) and TTE (n=45, 26%).

Imaging is crucial for the assessment of LV volumes and geometry. Despite the many indices that have been developed to characterize LV shape, LVR is better assessed by global parameters. Above all, LV end-systolic volume (LVESV) present a theoretical advantage, understanding that it combines data on both volumetric assessment and systolic function. White *et al.* [5] emphasized LVESV as a strong prognostic factor, incremental to LV ejection fraction. Nevertheless, the dichotomous threshold to effectively identify LVR is still debated. In the subset of CRT, a decrease in LVESV, from 10% [6] to 15% [7], was related to clinical prognosis and is used in 31 studies. In post-MI patients, LVR was defined in 55 (42%) studies using a predefined threshold. A 20% increase in LV end-diastolic volume (n=23) was the most common threshold. Surprisingly, it was never correlated with morbi-mortality, and the citation flow ends with McKay *et al.* [8]. Published in 1986, invasive LV angiography evaluated LVR between baseline and 14 days in patients treated by thrombolysis. Citation flows were drawn (figure 1 and 2).

Today, there is a noticeable void in recent prospective studies in the field of post-MI, despite its large prevalence and the continuous advances made in medical management [9]. Associations should be established on homogenous cohorts of patients, robust imaging methods, and long-term cardiac prognosis.

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Figures

Figure 1: Citation flow for LV remodeling thresholds in the context of cardiac resynchronization therapy. 10% (■) and 15% decrease in LVESV (●) were used in 31 (86%) threshold-using studies.

Figure 2: Citation flow for LV remodeling thresholds in the context of myocardial infarction. 20% increase in LVEDV (◆) and 15% increase in LVESV (□) were used in 29 (53%) threshold-using studies (see supplementary references).

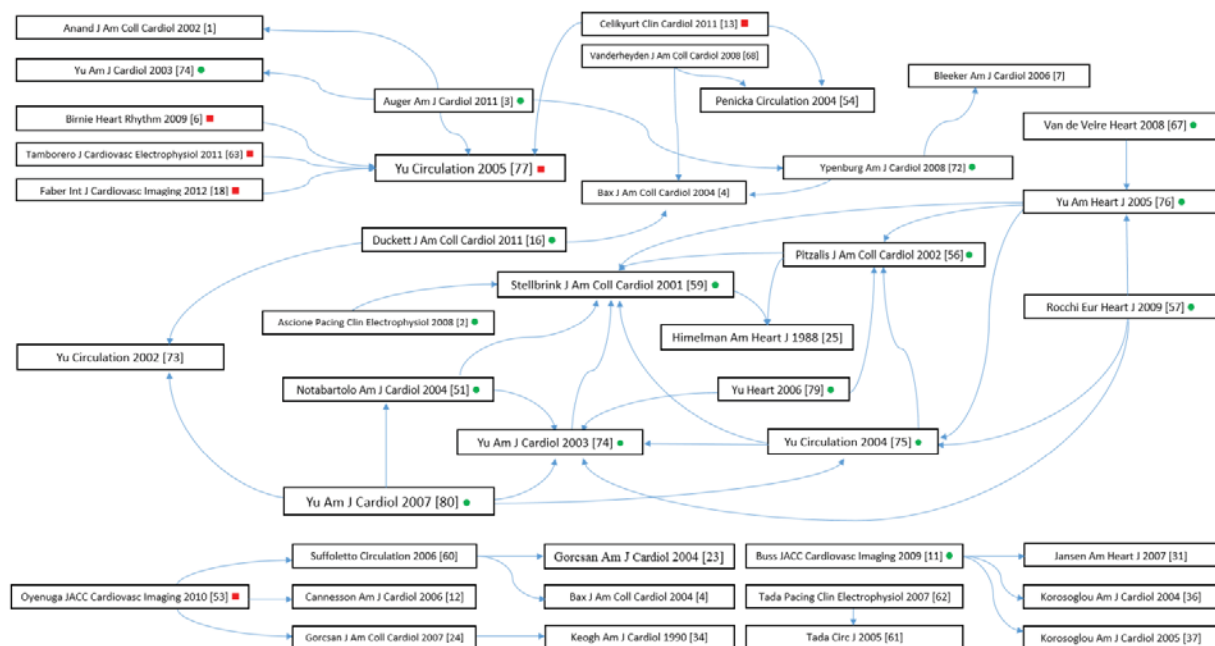


Figure 1

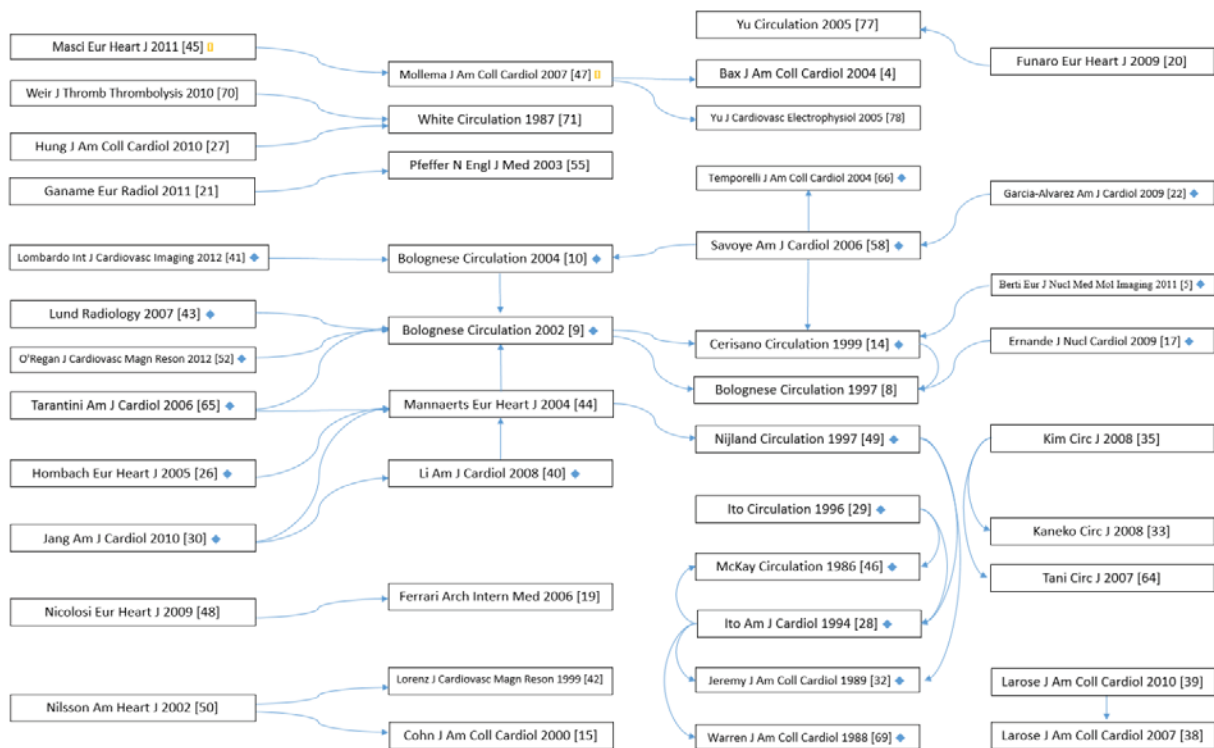


Figure 2